

**Early Design Guidance  
of the  
NORTHEAST DESIGN REVIEW BOARD**

**FEBRUARY 4, 2008**

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

**Project Number:** 3007933

**Address:** 6521 Roosevelt Way NE

**Applicant:** Homero Nishiwaki and Steve Johnson,  
Johnson Architecture & Planning,  
for Richard Loo, The Endeavour Group

**Board Members Present:** Susan Eastman Jensen (chair)  
Thomas Nelson  
Tricia Reisenauer  
Shawna Sherman

**Board Members Absent:** Craig Parsons

**City Staff:** Scott A. Ringgold, Land Use Planner

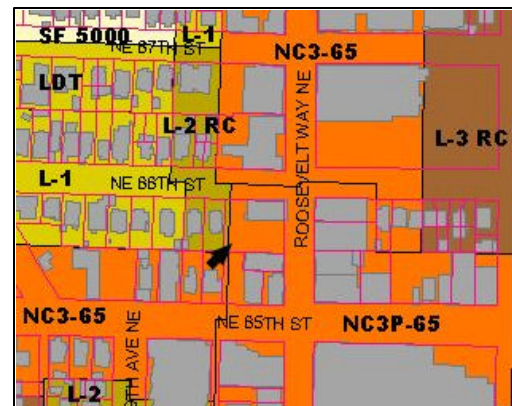
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**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Proposal for a six story, 61 unit residential building (with 2 live-work units) with 4,200 sq. ft. of retail at street level. Parking for 60 vehicles to be provided within the structure below grade.

**VICINITY AND SITE**

The site is located in the Roosevelt neighborhood, at the southwest corner of NE 66<sup>th</sup> St and Roosevelt Way NE. Roosevelt Way is a principal arterial (southbound traffic only) and 66<sup>th</sup> is a nonarterial. The vicinity slopes down to the southeast. The property is located in the Roosevelt Residential Urban Village.



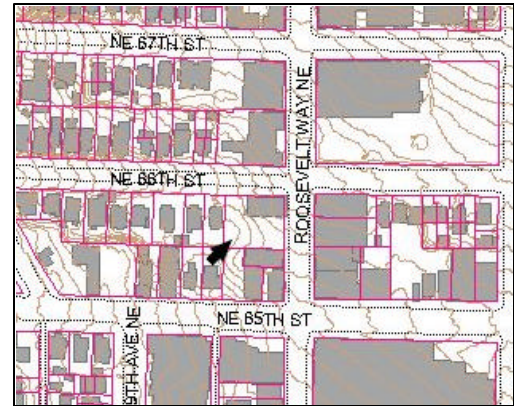
**Figure 1.** Vicinity Zoning

The site is split-zoned. On the east, the majority is zoned Neighborhood Commercial 3 with a 65-foot base height limit and a Pedestrian overlay (NC3P-65, see Figure 1). A 10'-wide strip along the site's west side is zoned Lowrise 2 Residential-Commercial (L2-RC). Properties to the east and south of the site are also zoned NC3P-65. Land to the north along Roosevelt way southwest along NE 65<sup>th</sup> St is zoned NC3-65 (no P overlay). To the west properties are zoned L2-RC and residential Lowrise 1 (L1) and Lowrise Duplex Triplex (LDT).

Development in the vicinity reflects its zoning, though much does not approach full zoning potential, suggesting that the area could experience substantial future redevelopment. In this vicinity, the Roosevelt Way corridor is characterized primarily by low commercial buildings designed in a range of styles and built over several decades. They include older residences converted to sidewalk retail, a row of pedestrian-oriented shops, and a historic movie theater currently occupied by a thrift store. To the northeast across the intersection, new development is proposed where a 1955 grocery store now stands. To the southeast across NE 65<sup>th</sup> St, a recently renovated commercial building now supports a variety of retail stores and another grocery. Two blocks to the east is Roosevelt High School. Surface parking lots exist in the vicinity, mostly located on smaller sites at the edges of the commercial district.

The site is regularly shaped, about 103' along Roosevelt and about 116' along 66<sup>th</sup>. The site is about 12,100 sq.ft. There is no alley, but a 10'-wide private access easement runs along the site's west side, apparently occupying all the L2 RC-zoned portion. The site slopes gradually down to the southeast, about 10'. No portion of the site is designated as Environmentally Critical Areas on City maps. The site was recently occupied by a one-story restaurant (the Scarlet Tree), which experienced a fire and has since been demolished. The site is unvegetated. On NE 66<sup>th</sup> there are existing curbs, gutter, and sidewalk and sufficient width to accommodate full sidewalk improvements. Along Roosevelt there are also full improvements, and a further 3' setback is required to provide for a wider sidewalk area.

The site is served by public transit.



**Figure 2.** Local topography



**Figure 3.** Aerial View

## **FIRST EARLY DESIGN GUIDANCE MEETING**

The first Early Design Guidance (EDG) meeting took place on February 4 2008, in the University Heights Community Center. The applicant submitted an early design packet, which provides a site and vicinity analysis that informs this report. The packet is available for public review at the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) Public Resource Center, located on the 20<sup>th</sup> floor of Seattle Municipal Tower, 700 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue

## **2/4/2008 EDG: ARCHITECT'S PRESENTATION**

Steve Johnson of Johnson Architecture and Planning presented the project's program and described the site and vicinity, referring to much of the information presented above. Mr. Johnson described the site as a gateway for people traveling south. "We're reading the site as ground-floor retail – a very important aspect," though he also identified challenges related to the slope of the existing sidewalk. With Roosevelt's high traffic volumes, he noted that the best location for a curb cut would be from 66<sup>th</sup>, at the existing driveway along the site's west side.

The design packet shows three massing concepts. All three take access from the site's northwest corner. Mr. Johnson characterized them as "subtly different". They all feature five levels of residential apartments located above ground-level commercial space. Concepts 1 and 3 steps back a portion of the top level from the principal façades. Concept 2 appears to forego any such stepping. Concept 3 provides a larger top level, but would require a rezone of the L2-RC-zoned portion of the site.

Mr. Johnson referenced the three massing concepts, but focused largely on the preferred concept. He described retail frontage along the full length of the Roosevelt façade. The design features a recessed residential entrance located midway along the 66<sup>th</sup> St façade, and two at-grade entries for live-work units toward the site's northwest corner. The design steps back 3' from the site's eastern property line, to provide for a wider sidewalk.

The design intent is to create "a strong ground-floor retail experience". The fall along the Roosevelt sidewalk allows for two points of entry. "We can demise into one, two, three or four individual spaces. Small spaces can thrive here, and we want to design to accommodate them. Retail and restaurant are both possible on the site. We can't recreate the Scarlett Tree, but we can design to include restaurant ventilation and allow for other retail spaces."

On the west side, a schematic site plan shows the line of the structure above, which would not extend into the vehicle easement. There would be a ramp down to structured parking below. The massing would be held back from the property line, providing "appropriate and meaningful setbacks to reduce the general sense of scale and break up the building's massing a bit. It's an NC3-65 zone next to an L2, so there's the adjacency question. You can see the scale issue between the small house next door and the project. This is a transition, and we're not building to the property line. We're setting back the building and the upper floor."

The design concept allows for terraces at the upper levels. There's essentially full lot coverage at the ground level, then at the second floor we set back to provide for green-factor landscaping, with a combination of decks. Above, the design meets the green factor without any request for departure. The design packet also includes sketches and preliminary elevations to give a sense of the design intent and the overall proposed massing.

The proposal requests additional height as allowed by the [Roosevelt neighborhood guidelines](#), and also provides the suggested setback at that level.

Mr. Johnson identified the northeast corner as a design challenge, related to the site's topography. At the high corner, "we don't have entrances there and maintain good commercial ceiling heights."

Referring to other projects of comparable height and scale, Mr. Johnson noted that he's been disappointed, because they often don't enhance the pedestrian space at the retail level. "In order to fit within the 65' height limit, the commercial level gets squeezed. So we'll pull the appearance of the base up a story and strengthen it to give it more visual weight and commercial appearance."

#### **2/4/2008 EDG: CLARIFYING QUESTIONS BY THE BOARD**

*You talked about two terraces, and I thought I heard a reference to green roofs. Except I also heard about habitable spaces – would it be a combination of the two? At the top terrace, it would be about 50% accessible decks, and 50% inaccessible garden areas.*

*Would there be individual decks for the apartments? We're not showing them right now – it's something we're discussing as part of the design. Right now there's accessible open space in common decks.*

*At this lower terrace level, is this a private space just for the four units? Yes.*

*Where would your garbage and recycling be located? In the parking level? It would be accessed from the back of the building and pulled to the sidewalk with dollies. It's located well within the building.*

*What's the proposed floor-to-floor height for the live-works? 13'? Can you really get a mezzanine in there? We've done something like that before, a flexible loft space with 4½ - 5 feet used for storage and other flexible functions. It wouldn't be a story, not a true mezzanine.*

*You said the design is challenged by the height. What do you think the commercial height will be? It's 13', so our interior space meets the requirement. It's around 12' inside. The floor will be about 2.5' below sidewalk grade at the corner.*

*By not having any entrances on that corner, you're carrying store windows around, and you imagine there will be signage and commercial activity. What will it be like?* We physically can't put the entrance there without losing a lot of floor area. We don't want to step down on the outside.

*On the west property line, you've stepped the building back to allow the access easement. I haven't seen an elevation of that side.* We haven't provided it – this is EDG, and our design is preliminary. *Would there be any screening or other treatment of this façade?* Yes. We can't do anything on the property line, because the people who own and use the easement for their business are parking there. Where we do control, we'll insert some elements and allow for some screening.

*Why is the preferred concept the one you chose?* In terms of the mix of residential dwellings, it's a pretty wide mix and a fair number of quite small apartment units. This massing gave us a small building that allowed for 400-500 sq.ft. units. They're compact, and the compact alignment allows us to access the terrace from a few places. These would be very nice places to live. This massing also allows us, with the setback, to request the additional height allowed in the Roosevelt guidelines. The massing also works for us, it allows for the best solar orientation and the right relationship to the properties to the west.

*Why not modulate more on the west side?* It's possible. The core is the most inflexible issue, related to the size of the site and the location of the easement, coupled with the required 3' sidewalk setback.

#### **2/4/2008 EDG: PUBLIC COMMENT**

Twelve members of the public signed in at the Early Design Guidance meeting on February 4, 2008. Comments from the meeting focused specifically on design guidelines and addressed issues of height, bulk and scale, finish materials, sidewalk enlivenment, human scale, solar access and architectural context. Comments also addressed quantity of parking and the project's proposed name. Comments related to design review included the following:

- I'm a Roosevelt business- and property owner. I'd like to specifically call attention to guidelines A1, A4, C1, C3 and E2.
- This could be across from a future transit station.
- We like the idea of widening the sidewalk.
- We're very concerned about the urban character. It should be pedestrian oriented and follow the neighborhood guidelines.
- The Scarlet Tree was an important, historic, and distinctive part of the neighborhood.
- Look at materials closely. For example, the addition to Roosevelt HS – it didn't try to replicate, but it does a good job of complementing.
- I'm concerned about the height of the structure adjacent to the lower zoned area. All my plants will die, because east light is what we get. It'll be a 20' house next to a 65' height.
- Setting the building back is great for sidewalks.
- You should integrate sustainable practices and design.
- Can you incorporate bricks? Some element of the Scarlet Tree.

- This is a gateway to our core. I'd like to see the use of something that would complement the terra cotta of the 6100 block, similar to what we see on the Roosevelt HS building.
- Be complementary to the nearby building that's already been through Design Review [a 6-story building on the QFC site].
- The 6-story scale will cast a shadow. That street gets icy.
- Respect the eccentricity and authenticity of the neighborhood. It's walkable and has a socioeconomic mix of people living there. Add some eccentricity to the design.
- Break up the roofline to allow more sunlight through.
- I live on 66<sup>th</sup> a few blocks down. This is the first time we'll see this scale surrounded by lower density.
- Use high quality design materials, something that weathers well and doesn't need to be maintained. Terra cotta, brick, and CMB – nicer materials like at the high school, especially at the base. It's a big building – we'll have to have quality.
- Why no entrance at the corner? Maybe you should curve it, with attention to activating it. Urban campers like to sit and eat there.
- Landscaping should be irrigated.

DPD also received two letters from community members, expressing concerns related to height limits, massing, landscaping, and access to the site from Dexter.

## **GUIDELINES**

After visiting the site, considering the analysis of the site and context provided by the proponents and hearing public comment, the Design Review Board members provided the siting and design guidance described below and identified by letter and number those siting and design guidelines of highest priority to this project, found in the City of Seattle's [\*Design Review: Guidelines for Multifamily and Commercial Buildings\*](#) (supplemented [1/20/2007](#)), and further supplemented by the [\*Roosevelt neighborhood guidelines\*](#). They gave the following design guidance to the applicant.

### **A. Site Planning**

#### **A-2 Streetscape Compatibility**

*The siting of buildings should acknowledge and reinforce the existing desirable spatial characteristics of the right-of-way.*

#### **A-3 Entrances Visible from the Street**

*Entries should be clearly identifiable and visible from the street.*

#### **A-4 Human Activity**

*New development should be sited and designed to encourage human activity on the street.*

#### **A-5 Respect for Adjacent Sites**

*Buildings should respect adjacent properties by being located on their sites to minimize disruption of the privacy and outdoor activities of residents in adjacent buildings.*

**A-6 Transition Between Residence and Street**

*For residential projects, the space between the building and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and encourage social interaction among residents and neighbors.*

**A-7 Residential Open Space**

*Residential projects should be sited to maximize opportunities for creating usable, attractive, well-integrated open space.*

**A-10 Corner Lots**

*Buildings on corner lots should be oriented to the corner and public street fronts. Parking and automobile access should be located away from corners.*

**2/4/2008 Guidance – Site Planning**

Board members generally agreed with the basic siting choices, including site access and the initial massing decisions.

The Board raised concerns about the northeast corner, recognizing that it's compromised if the commercial floor is built below sidewalk level. "It could be a strange situation with pedestrians looking down into the space." They invited the design team to present alternatives for how to address this corner "with more strength", suggesting that it should perhaps step back.

The Board supported the creation of flexible, small retail spaces. One Board member raised concerns about the live work spaces – to be successful, these must meet Code, have transparent fronts, appropriate signage, uncluttered ADA entries, appropriate visibility, and must relate well to the sidewalk.

**B. Height, Bulk & Scale**

**Roosevelt Guidelines:**

- *Retain a pedestrian scale of development, as experienced from public streets and sidewalks, in commercial areas.*
- *Minimize the impact of commercial development on adjacent residential areas.*

**B-1 Height, Bulk and Scale Compatibility**

*Projects should be compatible with the scale of development anticipated by the applicable Land Use Policies for the surrounding area and should be sited and designed to provide a sensitive transition to near-by, less-intensive zones. Projects on zone edges should be developed in a manner that creates a step in perceived height, bulk and scale between the anticipated development potential of the adjacent zones.*



## **2/4/2008 Guidance – Height Bulk & Scale**

This guideline is important – the Board identified it unanimously. Board members voiced concerns about shadow impacts on nearby structures, and noted that this design will be visible from a greater surrounding area. They identified as a high priority the appropriate modulation of the west façade.

### **C. Architectural Elements and Materials**

#### **Roosevelt Guidelines:**

- *Encourage new development that is compatible with the scale and architectural character of existing commercial development.*
- *Encourage streetscape improvements that aesthetically enhance and provide a sense of unity to the neighborhood's commercial areas without stifling the interest and character derived from variety.*

#### **C-1 Architectural Context**

*New buildings proposed for existing neighborhoods with a well-defined and desirable character should be compatible with or complement the architectural character and siting pattern of neighboring buildings.*

#### **C-2 Architectural Concept and Consistency**

*Building design elements, details and massing should create a well-proportioned and unified building form and exhibit an overall architectural concept.*

*Buildings should exhibit form and features identifying the functions within the building.*

*In general, the roofline or top of the structure should be clearly distinguished from its façade walls.*

#### **C-3 Human Scale**

*The design of new buildings should incorporate architectural features, elements and details to achieve a good human scale.*

#### **C-4 Exterior Finish Materials**

*Building exteriors should be constructed of durable and maintainable materials that are attractive even when viewed up close. Materials that have texture, pattern, or lend themselves to a high quality of detailing are encouraged.*

#### **C-5 Structured Parking Entrances**

*The presence and appearance of garage entrances should be minimized so that they do not dominate the street frontage of a building.*



## **2/4/2008 Guidance – Architectural Elements and Materials**

Board members identified a “strong cohesiveness” in the Roosevelt neighborhood. They encouraged creative gestures that reference the nature of the neighborhood, lending to its character. This could involve adaptive reuse of materials, or other contextual references.

The design updates should clearly detail the west wall, both from the perspective of nearby neighbors and from further away. Board members encouraged modulation along this façade, in a way that doesn’t detract from the unity of the overall design.

One Board member suggested that an alternative paving could be introduced along the access easement, so that it doesn’t read as a public alley.

## **D. Pedestrian Environment**

### **Roosevelt Guidelines:**

- *Improve the safety, comfort and visual quality of the pedestrian environment in neighborhood commercial areas, especially in the Core Commercial Area.*
- *Encourage the creation of publicly accessible open spaces that function as informal gathering places and are focal points for the neighborhood.*

### **D-1 Pedestrian Open Spaces and Entrances**

*Convenient and attractive access to the building’s entry should be provided. To ensure comfort and security, paths and entry areas should be sufficiently lighted and entry areas should be protected from the weather. Opportunities for creating lively, pedestrian-oriented open spaces should be considered.*

### **D-5 Visual Impacts of Parking Structures**

*The visibility of all at-grade parking structures or accessory parking garages should be minimized. The parking portion of a structure should be architecturally compatible with the rest of the structure and streetscape. Open parking spaces and carports should be screened from the street and adjacent properties.*

### **D-9 Commercial Signage**

*Signs should add interest to the street front environment and should be appropriate for the scale and character desired in the area.*

### **D-10 Commercial Lighting**

*Appropriate levels of lighting should be provided in order to promote visual interest and a sense of security for people in commercial districts during evening hours. Lighting may be provided by incorporation into the building façade, the underside of overhead weather*

*protection, on and around street furniture, in merchandising display windows, in landscaped areas, and/or on signage.*

#### **D-11 Commercial Transparency**

*Commercial storefronts should be transparent, allowing for a direct visual connection between pedestrians on the sidewalk and the activities occurring on the interior of a building. Blank walls should be avoided.*

#### **D-12 Residential Entries and Transitions**

*For residential projects in commercial zones, the space between the residential entry and the sidewalk should provide security and privacy for residents and a visually interesting street front for pedestrians. Residential buildings should enhance the character of the streetscape with small gardens, stoops and other elements that work to create a transition between the public sidewalk and private entry.*

#### **2/4/2008 Guidance – Pedestrian Environment**

The Board encouraged the design team to incorporate pedestrian amenities in their streetscape design. Board members instructed the design team to take cues from the existing built environment. Existing shop entries are recessed and their principal facades are modulated – look at how existing buildings do it and give the design more identity that way. One Board member suggested introducing different types of storefront windows and exterior finish materials, as if this were an accreted set of shops.

Overhead weather protection is important along Roosevelt.

Any landscaping proposed between the sidewalk and the windows should be carefully designed and clearly explained, so that it's clear that it doesn't interfere with the transparency of the storefront and pedestrian engagement.

The Board expects the design to feature no blank walls.

### **E. Landscaping**

#### **E-2 Landscaping to Enhance the Building and/or Site**

*Landscaping, including living plant material, special pavements, trellises, screen walls, planters, site furniture and similar features should be appropriately incorporated into the design to enhance the project.*

#### **1/1/2008 Guidance – Landscaping**

The Board encouraged the design team to carefully consider ways to screen the western garage entry. A flat wall at this location would be unacceptable, according to one Board member. A green wall is encouraged on this side.

At recommendations, the Board invited the design team to incorporate design input by a landscape architect.

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**DEPARTURE FROM DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS**

The applicant requested one departure from Land Use Code development standards.

<i><b>Requirement</b></i>	<i><b>Proposed</b></i>	<i><b>Comments</b></i>	<i><b>Board Recommendation</b></i>
For NC-65' zones, a departure allowing greater height with greater upper level setbacks may be considered, where appropriate. This departure shall be limited to three (3') additional feet in height.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	The Board indicated they were open to the idea of a height departure, but the design team should spell out what setback is proposed. They expect more setback on the west side and more modulation.
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•</li></ul>	

## **NEXT STEPS**

### **Recommendation Meeting**

1. Please provide building sections and elevations that show the proposed development in context with adjacent structures, including the western elevation.
2. Please provide a detailed site plan that includes proposed building entrances.
3. Please provide a larger scale site plan that demonstrates the relationship between the proposed development and surrounding development within a one and a half block radius.
4. Please provide a perspective drawing from NE 66<sup>th</sup> St, showing the western elevation.
5. Please provide a detail drawing of screening proposed to the west of the driveway.
6. Please submit a colored landscape plan.
7. Please submit a color and materials board.
8. Please submit a conceptual lighting plan.